

**MEETING SUMMARY #1
WSF COMMUNITY MEETING
SOUTH COLBY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PORT ORCHARD, WA
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2009 6:30 – 8:30 P.M.**

Note: This meeting summary represents notes from the Washington State Department of Transportation Ferries Division (WSF) Community Meeting, and is not a formal transcript or minutes. It is provided as a record for the staff and public in attendance, and other interested parties.

Welcome and Introductions

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley

David welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. He introduced his WSF staff members as well as several Ferry Advisory Committee (FAC) members who were in attendance, then briefly went over the agenda and noted that there would be time for public comment at the end of the meeting.

Route & Community Specific Issues

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley

The first route-specific topic David discussed was the Vashon dolphin construction. The project involves replacing two old creosoted timber dolphins with five new steel dolphins. The work is ongoing, and the two-week closure of slip 1 will continue through November 15th. This does involve some temporary schedule adjustments which are slight during the week and more extensive on the weekends. The closure will affect eastbound weekend travel the most. The work is going well, with the contractor being able to use the vibratory pile driving method rather than the louder and more environmentally impactful pile hammer. The slip is expected to reopen by the scheduled date.

The next route-specific issue that David discussed was the transition of the Vashon / Seattle passenger-only ferry service from WSF to King County. King County took over at the end of September and now has complete control of the passenger-only service. The boat they are using holds about 146 passengers versus the 250 passenger boat that WSF used. To compensate for that they have three runs in the morning and three in the afternoon compared to the two morning and two afternoon runs that WSF provided. This change has created some scheduling complications for our Southworth passengers; we received some customer feedback and have made some modifications to our schedule to allow for better meshing of the two service schedules. King County has adjusted

as well to sync up with our schedule better. We have not heard any further complaints from customers so we believe that issue has been resolved.

Clarifying Questions from Audience

1. My neighbor has been using the passenger-only service for years and she's coming in one boat later than normal now due to the schedule changes. This means that she is no longer able to carpool home with her regular group.
Please email us the details regarding those sailings and we will take a look at what we can do.
2. Will this schedule be stable? Is that the permanent boat that they will be using?
Yes, for the foreseeable future. The new King County Executive appears to be a proponent for the PO service, so it will probably continue but not expand. The current King County budget proposes taking property tax money away from ferry service to support the loss of income from Metro; time will tell if there is enough money left to support the level of service they are providing now.
The small boat will remain?
Yes, until they have the funds to build a bigger boat. There is also less crewing and fueling expense on the smaller boat.
3. I have a suggestion that I heard from someone who uses the passenger-only service and meets up with the boat that leaves Vashon at 6:25. The PO boat is making it in plenty of time right now, but may slow down as the weather worsens. Would it be possible to change the schedule to a tentative 6:25 departure, and if the PO boat is late hold the WSF boat until it gets there?
We will look into it.
4. I have heard complaints from some riders who use the late night boats out of Fauntleroy who wonder why the boats don't go both places?
One of the boats is at the end of its crew day and it doesn't have time to go all the way to Vashon and then tie up.
What about the next one? If you're a walk-on and you're sitting there waiting watching a half-empty boat go by, it's frustrating.
We redid that schedule in 2003 after surveying customers. We made those changes based on what we heard was needed. We try to alternate the double and single stops. We can revisit that issue.
5. We really appreciate you coming out. In March I believe Kitsap Transit will take delivery of this experimental ferry service [low wake vessel]. What will this mean for you?
That's a good question. We have not talked to Kitsap Transit as much as we need to. During that heavy commute time it would be nice to be



coordinated so all the boats aren't there at the same time. The Port of Kingston is also looking at coming into Colman dock as well. Thanks for the reminder.

6. The new crew endurance requirements influenced the schedule, are there adjustments?

In Bremerton we needed to move some morning sailings 15 minutes earlier to open up time in the afternoon.

Nothing affecting Southworth?

There were no changes to the triangle schedule.

New Vessel Program

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley

David discussed the construction of the new ferry at Todd Shipyard. We are currently undergoing construction of the first 64-car ferry. The project is on time and on budget; it is looking like a boat at this point rather than a bunch of pieces of steel. We have monthly meetings with Todd Shipyard which are very informative. It will be completed by the end of June next year, and then there will be testing and sea trials for 4-6 weeks. We expect the new vessel to be in service on the Port Townsend / Keystone run in August of 2010. This is our first new boat in 10-12 years and we are very pleased. We recently had a bid opening for 2 more 64-car ferries with an option for a third. The bid came in much better than the first bid, so even though there was only one bidder again, there was still a significant savings.

Clarifying Questions from Audience

1. I thought we would see bigger savings.

10 million dollars a boat is a pretty big savings.

Not if there's only one bid.

It would have been nice if we had had more bids, but we are thankful that we had the one. We are hopeful that funding will be available for the two 64-car boats and the option of a third. They have been awarded the work for the two additional boats. The second 64-car ferry is scheduled to be delivered in the spring of 2011, with the third to follow in late winter of 2012. The hope is that after those are complete we can move directly into the construction of at least two 144-car boats. We need larger boats to go on our larger runs; the 64-car boats will serve some runs very well, but that wouldn't be enough capacity for other runs. We need to move quickly; we have allocated funds from some unanticipated federal grants, allowing us to do the final 144-car design work with Todd over the next year, so that if funds become available we will be in a position to move directly into building the 144-car ferries. We don't want to be in the



position of having funds for the vessels and then having to spend time on the design, so we are doing it now.

I just want to live to see one.

2. (Rep. Angel) I went over to Todd Shipyard and spent the morning, and I can tell you that it is coming along; it's real.

We are particularly pleased with the changes that we've made in our management practices; we understand that there was some over-managing from WSF in the past, and we wanted to make sure that that is not the case now. We have a lot of appreciation for Todd; they are doing the work properly. We are trying to be partnership minded with them rather than being too heavy handed. From the start we said that this needs to be a partnership, and we actually wrote up the principals of how we would manage the project; that has been great guidance for us. They are terrific to work with, and I think this has been a great way of showing people that we can do this. We can manage the project; the shipyards here can build the boats. This shows that we have a system that works.

3. It seems to me that the Steilacoom was supposed to be the model for the new 64-car boats, but then there were upgrades. I thought that the Tacoma was made for 30 million, why are these so much more?

The core of these new boats was modeled after the Island Home boats that are in use at Nantucket on the east coast. We took that design and made changes to make it applicable for the Northwest. Some of the changes cost more, some saved us money. They are able to discharge their waste into the ocean; we can't do that and needed to add storage space. They have an HVAC system suited for their hot summers and freezing winters that we do not need here. Those island homes were built for 32 million.

Thanks for the perspective. You say the 10 million dollar reduction is significant, but I still find it bothersome.

Those boats were built 5-6 years ago when steel was considerably cheaper, so that has to be taken into account as well.

4. I just got back from the Greek Isles; watching their ferries I saw that they have small and medium passenger-only boats, and lots of different sizes of car ferries. I wonder why we have so much trouble trying to find the right size.

I think the 64s and the 144s are the right size, and will work very well. We don't want to spend time and money designing any more boats. We want to build boats.

Vehicle Reservations Pre-Design Study

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley, WSF Operations and Project Manager Doug Schlieff

David gave a brief overview of the events involved so far with WSF conducting this pre-design study. The Legislature has directed us to do a pre-design study of what a reservations system would look like. What would the IT / back office technology have to be to serve the needs of our customers? What business rules would need to be in place to make the system work well and be flexible? The Legislature wanted to see this study applied to a specific route, so we chose Edmonds / Kingston because that run has so many of the characteristics that are present in other routes. It is a challenging route, which is what we wanted, to really show whether reservations can work or not. The Kingston side has sufficient space, whereas the Edmonds side does not, similar to Fauntleroy. We have been working with a partnership group made up of users from both sides of that route for months, which is a terrific group and has given us lots of important feedback. The Legislature directed us to do this and report the results back to them – they have not authorized us to implement reservations anywhere. They want to see the pre-design study to see how reservations would work, and to make sure that it would be helpful to customers rather than an inconvenience. This is only worth doing if it can help our customers as well as help us spread our demand better. David then introduced Doug as the project manager for the study. Doug has been with WSF for many years and is a daily ferry commuter. We wanted someone involved in this study that uses the ferries everyday and can ask the question: how would that work for me?

Doug continued the discussion by explaining some of the reasons for reservations. Most have heard about the steel electrics being pulled from service. That event combined with the fact that our entire fleet is aging has led to all of the funding being directed toward building new boats. There is no funding for terminal expansion. Because of the financial situation that the state is in, we have had to identify some strategies that will allow us to better use the space that we have without expanding any of our facilities. A reservation system may be one way to do that. It was identified in our Long Range Plan and the Legislature directed us to take a closer look at this possibility. As we go through the pre-design study, some of our goals are to make reservations easy to use and convenient; we have many different types of users like tourists, commuters and freight, and we want to maintain flexibility for each of those user types. We want to make sure that the reservations system would meet the needs of our riders and also work for WSF by being able to integrate with our current ticketing system. Our intent is to learn first from our own experience with reservations, which are in place on our Anacortes / Sidney, and Port Townsend / Keystone runs already. We also have a freight reservations program for the San Juan

Islands. If we get approval and funding for reservations, those places are where we would implement the new reservations system first before expanding to a different route. We are continuing to work with our Edmonds / Kingston partnership group, which has been very helpful and has brought many new things to light for us. The next step will be to prepare the final draft of the study which is due to the Legislature on December 15th.

David added that we have learned from other ferry systems' experiences as well; we have had extensive conversations with ferry systems that use reservations around the world. We don't need to reinvent the wheel; most ferry systems use reservations and we want to learn as much as we can from others.

Doug agreed; I went to visit BC Ferries, which has some similarities to WSF. They use reservations and it is quite a successful system. We were also visited by representatives from a ferry system in Quebec, who were also looking to implement reservations on their system. Although there are many systems to learn from around the world, WSF is unique and has some unique challenges.

Clarifying Questions from Audience

1. So this model that you're doing is going to show the estimated cost?
There will be no reservations fee for our customers, so there will be no additional cost to them. The pre-design report is a very structured document which will show the costs of the proposed system as well as the alternatives.
2. Will there be extra staff involved?
The system will incur some staff in places; we will need back office people to handle the reservations, but we're not sure yet how many.
3. Tell me more about the rollout. When will we be able to give some comments? This handout is full of generalities. The details I need to know are when it's coming to my area.
The report will be available on December 15th, and there will be a lot of opportunities for discussion with the Legislature as they go through the session.
4. People in other FACs want to know, will you be having meetings and asking for comments, or is this just between you and Edmonds / Kingston?
Right now it would be premature to talk to people about this. It is up to the Legislature as to whether or not we will ever have reservations. If they find that it will have merit on any of our routes, we would engage in a similar partnership group with each community prior to implementation.
5. You dropped Plan B on us this time last year; we don't want that to happen again. We were going crazy, we had no heads-up.

We understand. We will get the report out as soon as we can. It will go to the JTC and be made available to everyone.

6. I bet on all those calls around the world you never found a route like the triangle.

Yes, it is a unique route.

There are a lot of commuters on this run. The allocations between Southworth and Vashon, unless you take those away it won't be equal.

I don't see that reservations would impact the allocations.

Well Vashon gets $\frac{3}{4}$ anyway and we deal with the rest.

Those would be details that we would work out down the line.

I wouldn't waste any time on this route.

The report will clearly say that reservations might work well on some routes and not on others.

7. Are the Kingston / Edmonds people basically into it? They want to do this?

We have not heard outright agreement, but they have voluntarily come down to work with us and figure it out. They are engaged and willing to see if it will work.

8. Have you rode the boats and asked the commuters what they think?

I've talked to a few. We are a long way from implementing reservations anywhere at this point. If the Legislature says to go forward, we would test it on the routes where we already take reservations.

9. Do the design and work it out with the community. Get it going; I'm ready.

Preparing for the 2010 Legislative Session

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley

David discussed the upcoming 2010 Legislative session. As you know WSF was front and center during the 2009 Legislative session, with Plan B in the spotlight. We don't anticipate that same attention in the 2010 session. There are some important things they have asked to see; the reservations pre-design study is one of those. Also they want to see a new accident and incident investigation policy, fuel conservation targets, and information regarding a fuel surcharge in case gas prices spike again. Those are some issues that will be discussed; these are reports on things that the Legislature has asked us to look at, but they are not hot-button issues like the Long-Range Plan last year and the vessel and terminal issues. The JTC (Joint Transportation Committee) is doing a study on alternative funding options for transportation, because the gas tax is dropping as cars become more fuel efficient. In 2016 there is a one billion dollar gap in funding for the ferry system, and we need to fill that gap. That discussion will be occurring more in the 2011 session, but we need to be ready and at the table for those

discussions. If there is a comprehensive transportation package for the Legislature to consider we need to be a part of it.

Clarifying Questions from Audience

1. You have to be at the table. The problem with the ferries year after year is that we are not considered a marine highway. We don't have funding and you know that; we need to keep their attention. You should be part of the budget just like the roads are.
2. All of us in the ferry communities are focusing on the 2011 session to have a major rethink of both ends of transportation. We need funding sources. The gas tax is not enough. On the other end we need to think about the right mix of roads, transit and ferries. It needs to be a serious discussion in 2011. We need to not only ask for better service and boats, we need to talk about where the money is going to come from.
3. I agree with that. What I see happening is other jurisdictions are adding tolls. We have had tolls for a long time.
4. Yes, when people choke on the idea of tolls, point out to them that the ferries have always been tolled.
5. The Keller Ferry on Lake Roosevelt needs replacing. The committee has to fund that as well.
The 2010 session will be busy but we will be focused on doing our homework for the 2011 session so that we don't miss any opportunities that may come up.
6. Thank goodness we saved the FACs, that's all I have to say.
7. With the enormous budget shortfall, what has the Governor come to you and said will be cut? Fuel reductions, service?
The Legislature has made it clear that we will be able to maintain our current level of service, but there will be no new money. We will not be able to make any changes unless they are cost neutral. The Legislature made a firm decision for Plan A. There is a gap but we are not getting direction from the budget office for large reductions. However, anything we want to do will be scrutinized.
8. Are you allowed to keep any savings you may find in the system?
Yes, our money is in the Puget Sound account.
9. What about advertising, have you done any more of that?
You probably don't see a lot down here because the advertisers want to be where the most people are. We have a firm that helps us with advertising, and in 2008 we raised \$200,000 for the whole year. This year we are at \$280,000 with a couple months more to go. We have some large campaigns, but we need to be more aggressive. I like to see the additional revenue but I want to see quicker growth.
How many routes is it on?

- Bainbridge, Bremerton, Edmonds / Kingston, and at the terminals as well.*
10. Will the minutes of this meeting be available online?
Yes, all of our community meeting notes will be posted online, and our Edmonds / Kingston partnership meeting notes for all the meetings so far are all available online.
11. Thank you very much for coming out and speaking with us. We really appreciate the attempts to communicate with the public, and it is greatly improved from years past.

Public Comments & Questions

There were no further comments or questions from the public in attendance.

Conclusion

David thanked everyone for coming. Meeting was adjourned.